

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONSOLIDATION - CYCLE THREE**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This penultimate chapter is concerned with the planning, implementation and evaluation of the third and last cycle in this action research study. During this chapter I will highlight the refinements and extensions that I made to the existing methodology and my student centred approach to the students. It will also document new additions made and the reasons for including them. Finally it will record the implementation phase as well as the evaluation of the cycle.

#### **8.2 The planning of cycle three**

The planning of cycle three was a culmination of what I had learnt and what had flowed out of the reconnaissance and previous two cycles. At this stage of the year the school had settled into a routine, the timetable was more or less fixed and the staff fairly stable. In planning for phase three I realised that there were still a few changes I needed to make to improve my classroom situation. These changes and additions would be included in reshaping the general plan.

The use of cooperative learning did provide greater opportunities for the learners to use English and its a larger communal pool of language and knowledge did contribute to a degree in solving some of the language and background issues, but I still felt that I needed an extra dimension to the lessons to help in both these areas. An additional reliable and available source of information and English was required. I also realised that in the future, if these children were to persist in following their dream of an education for a better future, then learning from text would probably play a significant part.

The first six months had put all of us as staff through a baptism of fire with regard to learners' behaviour. The cauldron had been too hot for many but those who remained had developed their own techniques of surviving and coping. The school counsellor's Transactional Analysis programme with many of the classes and individuals, especially the very difficult grade 8 class, was beginning to pay dividends in terms of the boys understanding their disruptive behaviour. A number of the very difficult boys had left of their own accord and the principal had introduced a strict code of conduct with disciplinary procedures. All of these went a long way in helping to make a school and classroom a little easier to deal with.

**CYCLE 3**  
**MONITORING AND REFLECTION THROUGHOUT**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES**

PLANNING (P3)

**(Replace this page Special Page: Page 249)**

CYCLE 2

EVALUATION  
(E3)

REVISED GENERAL  
PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION (I3)

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

Elements of methodology used:

- \* Demonstration
- \* Explanation
- \* Cognitive questioning
- \* Equipment
- \* Worksheets
- \* Cooperative learning
- \* Strategic academic reading

### **Figure 8.1      Model of Cycle 3**

Like the previous two cycles, cycle three consisted of three stages. Figure 8.1 shows that there was a planning phase (P3), an implementation phase (I3) and an evaluation phase (E3). Cycle three lasted from 24 July 2002 and was completed on 16 September 2002.

The completion of cycle three brought the planned action research design of reconnaissance and three cycles to an end. Although not all of the problems of teaching street children in a formal setting such as a classroom had been surmounted, I do believe that the innovations and techniques I had used had reduced them substantially. However the personal emotional and psychological cost had been significant and many of the systemic and school environmental issues influencing the classroom remained.

#### **8.2.1 Learner behaviour, teacher/learner relationship and classroom environment**

Over seven months this had gradually grown into a situation where a constructive, productive, relaxed and trusting learning culture existed in my class. This I believed had been established through my student centred approach, the belief by the students in my authenticity both as a person and a teacher and the trust that I had won. My strategy of calm, caring firmness, of competent and enthusiastic teaching, my patience with them and my displayed ongoing belief in their potential had gained this acceptance. I had offered them my truth and they had embraced me with their trust. Underneath the sophisticated methodology and clever techniques I knew it was this simple gift that had made me different, special and successful. I retained this approach in this cycle.

I also decided to work closely with the school counsellor in providing feedback for and supporting the programmes (Magdel Harper, 2003) she was running with groups of students in order to deal with their disruptive behaviour.

#### **8.2.2 Practical issues**

For this third cycle I continued the broad spectrum approach of teaching Mathematics and Science with

all four of the grades but at the same time focussed more specifically on the Science teaching in the grade 8 class. This class remained the most difficult to deal with and teach and provided the most challenges to all the teachers.

Unfortunately the Pretoria College required my beautiful large carpeted classroom of the first two cycles for courses they wanted to run and so I was forced to move to a smaller, much noisier colder classroom with dreadful acoustics and a temporary chalk board.

### **8.2.3 Syllabus content for cycle three**

It was during both cycle one and two, especially during the Mathematics classes, that I realised the boys had very little conceptual or practical knowledge with regard to physical quantities such as length, area, volume, capacity or mass. They possessed poor measuring skills and found the recording of the measurements they had made very difficult. They also struggled when attempting to solve everyday problems using these concepts. I therefore decided to deal with Matter and Measurement because of the fundamental role these concepts play in the learning and understanding of both Science and Mathematics. A second reason was that I believed that these topics would be very suitable for the addition of text to the methodology I had planned for this cycle. I divided this area of study into the following lessons. These were the lessons I recorded on video tape.

Lessons 1 & 2: The concept of matter. The properties of matter. The classification of matter and  
The three states of matter.

Lessons 3 & 4: The importance of accurate measurement. Estimation and accurate measurement.  
Classification of measuring instruments.

Lessons 5 & 6: The measurement of length.

Lessons 7 & 8: The determination of the area of squares and rectangles.

Lessons 9 & 10: The determination of the volume of solid cubes and rectangular blocks.

### **8.2.4 Methodology**

For this cycle I decided to use a more balanced combination of demonstration, explanation, cognitive questioning and cooperative learning. When reflecting on past experience and considering the lessons for Matter and Measurement I realised that a more eclectic approach was more realistic and needed to maintain interest. I would retain the use of worksheets and wherever possible the learners would

handle the equipment needed for the lessons themselves.

However as a further addition to the methodology I decided to introduce the concept of learning through the reading of text. Kinneavy and Rutherford (1970) state that junior high school students who are disadvantaged such as street children are, have a variety of deficiencies in language and reading skills, and to remedy these, carefully planned and consistent classroom instruction is needed. The motivation level of disadvantaged students with regard to reading also needs to be addressed. If the street child does not feel the urgency to improve his reading skills, if he cannot see the crucial relationship between such abilities and the immediate, utilitarian situation in which he finds himself, the reading dominated school will seem so unreal that he will turn his back on it and return to what he considers to be “really” real. Therefore the previous two authors say the basis of the instruction must be materials and activities that are immediately interesting and useful to the students. Deutsch (1963) adds to this by commenting that success in reading is dependent to a certain degree on the ability in the spoken language. Therefore, opportunities for the use and improvement of oral language need to be explored as well.

Sears, Carpenter and Burstein (1994) call for a whole language approach to reading for special needs learners which is subject and literature based, focusses on the integration of reading and writing and instruction which facilitates the learners’ construction of meaning from print. They encourage the use of real texts which are interesting, age appropriate and representative of the normal curriculum. Although meaningful and relevant text material may well draw the students into reading the poorer readers might still have great difficulty understanding connected and subject dense text. They therefore stress the need for explicit comprehension strategies for independent use for students at risk.

In order therefore to provide strategies for academic reading, background information to the topic being discussed and to act as an information and language resource, I decided to use text as an integral part of the Science lessons along with the other methodology previously mentioned.

Most students learn basic reading at school. However after being able to decode text they have to struggle on their own to develop more advanced reading skills - the very skills that are needed more

and more as they progress up the school grades. As a result their reading is often poor and they have difficulty with reading their textbooks, written instructions and examination papers (Rodseth, 1995a). If this is true for mainstream students how much more relevant is it not for deprived street children who's education has been seriously interrupted. While at the Centre for Cognitive Development I was part of a team which developed the S\*T\*A\*R\*T programme (CCD, 1995). This acronym stands for Strategies for Academic Reading and Thinking and was designed to help students become better readers. The reasons put forward for developing this programme were:

- The development of academic reading abilities to help students cope at school, tertiary education, the working world and life in general.
- To learn the essential knowledge found in reading passages and books.
- To learn to enjoy reading.
- To build reading confidence that we all need to succeed in our technological and literate world.
- To improve the student's speaking, listening and writing.

It was my belief that by teaching the students to use a reading strategy I would be providing and equipping them with an essential tool which they could use profitably wherever they found themselves.

The S\*T\*A\*R\*T programme could be called a cognitive approach to reading because all the activities connected to it like the pre-reading exercises, reading and post-reading exercises are designed to develop thinking and comprehension. It is also a metacognitive process because the students are encouraged to constantly think about the purpose of the reading, the processes being used when they read and when they complete the tasks associated with the reading. Before the student reads he prepares for what he will read, during the reading he thinks about what he is reading and afterwards he considers and uses what he has read (CCD, 1995).

Academic reading, such as is found in text books and examinations, by its nature, has a dense information load and is therefore very demanding. To read this kind of text and learn from it successfully a strategy for dealing with this type of reading is needed (CCD, 1995). For the purpose of my lessons I proposed to adapt the S\*T\*A\*R\*T process slightly and follow this structure.

### 1. *Explain the purpose of the reading.*

This could be to answer a question, to find out something that is puzzling or which we need, or to answer an examination question.

### 2. *Activate background knowledge:*

Here the students are asked to think about what they know about what they are about to read. The student rarely approaches new knowledge with a blank mind but rather with a network and collection of existing knowledge called schema (Piaget, 1952). New knowledge connects with existing schema changing and adding to it.

### 3. *Survey the text:*

This activity is designed to further strengthen the schema by looking at various aspects of the text before it is read. For my reading lessons I decided on the following techniques:

- Read the title and explain what it tells about what is to be read.
- Look at the pictures and explain what they tell about what is to be read.
- Read the bold headings and words and explain what they tell about what is to be read.
- Look at the tasks to see what tasks will be worked on later.

For this part of the lesson I used a cognitive questioning approach.

### 4. *Reading the text:*

During this part of the reading strategy three types of reading were done.

- Silent reading of the passage by the students.
- Voluntary reading of paragraphs aloud by different students.
- Reading of the passage aloud by the teacher.

### 5. *Dealing with words which are not understood:*

During the readings of the passage the students underlined any words they did not understand. After the reading the teacher dealt with these words one by one making sure that they were understood.

*6. Sharing in pairs what the students have understood through the readings:*

Each student then is given the opportunity of explaining to a partner in English what he has learnt from the readings.

*7. Completing the tasks as set out in the worksheets.*

The readings were then supplemented or elaborated on by further practical demonstrations, explanations or cognitive questioning. The tasks were done either individually, in pairs or cooperatively as a group.

After studying the only available Science text in the school I realised that for my purposes in terms of content and level of language it was unsuitable. Because of the necessity of providing meaningful and relevant material I decided to write the reading passages myself (Sears, Carpenter and Burnstein, 1994). For this cycle I therefore wrote five pieces covering the following topics: What is everything made of? Measuring things. How long is that thing? What is area? Taking up space. As an example of these passages, the reading strategy and the post-reading tasks I include parts of worksheets number two, three and five as Attachment 8A in the Appendix.

### **8.2.5 Data collection methods used in cycle three**

The methods used during this cycle were very similar to those used in cycle one and two. Below in table 8.1 is a summary of the methods used.

### **8.3 The implementation of cycle three**

The implementation of cycle three lasted from 24 July until 16 September 2002. Although I continued to teach Mathematics and Science to all four classes and used a broad spectrum of observation with them all during this cycle I focussed and concentrated my attention on the teaching of Science to the difficult and disruptive grade 8 class. The other three classes had settled down into a routine and behaviour pattern very similar to what I had experienced in mainstream schooling. Although the situation with the grade 8's had improved I still believed that they needed further attention and consideration.



No	Data source	Grades	Remarks	Date
1	Observation while teaching	7,8,9 & 10	Done during presentation of lessons	24:07:2002 to 16:09:2002
2	Field notes	7,8,9 & 10	Done before, during and after lessons.	24:07:2002 to 16:09:2002
3	Diary	7, 8 9 & 10	Written up daily.	29:07:2002 to 16:09:2002
4	Miscellaneous documents: 1. Attendance registers 2. Expulsion report on grade 8 students	7,8,9 & 10 8	Ongoing.	24:07:2002 to 16:09:2002 10:09:2002
5	Classroom observation	8	Triangulated by competent observer	02:08:2002
6	Video - classroom analysis	8	9 video taped lessons on Matter and measurement.	30:07:2002 to 16:08:2002
7	Written cycle test 3	8	Test on matter and measurement	16:09:2002
8	Learner questionnaires	8	Consisted of 10 alternative response questions covering methodology and two open ended questions covering me as a person and teacher and comments on my lessons.	17:09:2002
9	Teacher questionnaires		Completed by 2 teachers. Their thoughts on teaching street children.	23:08:2002
10	November examinations	7,8,9 & 10	Results for Science and Mathematics	11:2002
11	Worksheets	7 & 8	Include individual and group worksheets	30:07:2002 to 16:08:2002

**Table 8.1 Summary of data collection methods for Cycle 3**

### **8.3.1 The flow of implementation in cycle three**

The flow of the implementation, the content of the special lessons chosen for video taping and examples of questions asked in the achievement test can be found as attachment 8B in the Appendix.

### **8.4 Evaluation of cycle three**

In general terms the last four months of the year for me were a time of combination , integration and consolidation of the methodology that I had introduced gradually and incrementally through the

previous two cycles. It was also a time to maintain and deepen the relationship and trust that I had built up with the boys through an ongoing genuine interest in them and their futures. Swart (1996) had been right when she said that forming trusting relationships with street children is not easy. It was only after nearly seven months at the school that I had achieved the relationship with the boys that I believed was necessary to educate them holistically. The following were the main issues which flowed out of the analysis of this cycle. I will first deal with the wider contextual issues and then the narrower classroom ones.

#### **8.4.1 The contextual issues which impacted on the learners**

##### **8.4.1.1 School organization**

In terms of organization by this stage of the year the school had stabilised. The timetable operated fairly smoothly although, because of a shortage of suitable volunteer staff, gaps appeared in parts of the day for some grades. The majority of the staff hung on grimly to their positions because of the possibility of the school receiving departmental approval and subsidization or obtaining outside funding that would provide permanent posts and salaries for them. Application had been made to the Educational Department early in the year but the tortoise like official bureaucracy and disinterest had dragged along at such a slow pace that by August the patience and optimism of the staff had flagged to cynicism, scoff and negative resignation. Also money that had been raised overseas for the school and which was rumoured had been earmarked for salaries, did not materialise either. These ongoing disappointments understandably were devastating on the morale, enthusiasm and level of commitment of the teachers. They could not hide this disillusionment and their blackening mood resulted in a further downward spiral of legitimacy, credibility and authenticity of the school in the eyes of the learners. The effect of this negative perception was felt in the passages, playground and classrooms of the school. This low level of school satisfaction had again substantiated Baker's research (1998) that school dissatisfaction resulted in behavioural problems and poor school achievement as well as Fine's (1986) contention that it caused school alienation.

Probably the greatest organizational disappointment of the school to this point was the failure to operationalise some form of skills training apart from computer instruction and also to introduce more appropriate sports and cultural activities for the boys. Both were due to a lack of money and facilities

but also to the fact that after five hours of teaching the staff were too exhausted for further voluntary involvement. A number of volunteer attempts were tried but these always petered out after a short while.

School enrollment and attendance also haemorrhaged slowly through the bandages of good intentions until only the hard core was left. This hard core being those who attended from the private homes of family or friends or from the shelters - the management of which insisted that they attend. In my classes none of the original children that had come to the school directly from the streets remained. The energy needed for the combination of survival and school attendance was just too much to sustain especially in a school that they did not believe in. My attendance register from March shows a compliment in the four grades that I taught of 49. By September this had fallen to 35. The reasons for their leaving were:

- Persistent substance abuse
- Serious theft at school
- Lack of finance to get to school
- Continuous disruptive and obnoxious behaviour
- Lure of peers who have gone back to the street
- Expulsion from shelters
- Sex offences
- Loss of motivation to attend school

## **8.4.2 Classroom issues which impacted on the study**

### **8.4.2.1 Methodology**

Table 8.2 summarises the lesson observation scores recorded by myself and the independent triangulator. The triangulator scored the lesson at 98,2% of the cognitive style model and myself at 94% of the model. The average of these two scores was 96,1%. This score represents a lesson very close to the cognitive teaching style model aimed for. Apart from these scores probably the most significant appraisal can be found in the spontaneous comment written on the top of the observation schedule after the lesson by the triangulator. I quote:

“This was an exceptionally well constructed lesson. All the elements of a Cognitive Teaching

Style lesson with the emphasis on emotional mediation and construction of own knowledge were present. Brilliant!” (Triangulator’s report, 02:08:2002).

Section A							Section B	Section C	Total
Observer	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Total	Total	Total	Total
Max	27	15	24	15	15	96	12	9	117
Triangulator	27 100%	15 100%	24 100%	14 93,3%	15 100%	95 98,9%	11 91,6%	9 100%	115 98,2%
Researcher	24 88,8%	13 86,6%	22 91,6%	15 100%	15 100%	89 92,7%	12 100%	9 100%	110 94%
Average	25,5 94,4%	14 93,3%	23 95,8%	14,5 96,6%	15 100%	92 95,8%	11,5 95,8%	9 100%	112,5 96,1%

#### Section A: Teaching practice - Teaching for thinking

Part 1: Cognitive questioning

Part 2: Teacher feedback to responses

Part 3: Cooperative learning

Part 4: The role of language in learning

Part 5: The use of learning aids

#### Section B: Learner behaviour

#### Section C: Teacher\learner relationship

**Table 8.2      Summary of triangulated lesson using observation schedule - Cycle 3 - 02:08:2002**

In evaluating the methodology used the results of the learner questionnaire given to nine grade 8 boys on 17 September 2002 is also enlightening. Table 8.3 shows a summary of their feedback to the methodological alternate response questions. Table 8.4 shows a thematic summary to the following open ended question put to them: What did you think of my lessons?

In analysing the responses to these questions after the completion of cycle three the following can be seen. The overall response to the methodology that I used was very positive and their opinion on how much they had liked and learnt was heartening. Their responses to the amount understood shows that perhaps some of the concepts in this cycle were difficult for them. Here the concepts of area and

volume come to mind. The use of equipment and questions was still enjoyed.

However probably the most encouraging result was their positive feedback with regard to the strategic reading for information innovation I had introduced during this cycle. The question on group work confirmed the mixed feelings they had about it that had surfaced in cycle two.

Grade	Q 1: How much of my lessons did you like?	Q 2: How much do you think you learnt?	Q. 3: How much did you understand?	Q 4: How much of my English could you understand?
8	All 8    Some 1    None 0	A lot 8    A little 1    Nothing 0	Most 4    Some 5    Nothing 0	A lot 8    A little 1    None 0
	Q 5: How much did all the equipment help you to understand the lessons?	Q 6: Did you like being asked questions in the lessons?	Q 7: How free did you feel to answer the questions?	Q 8: How did you find the questions I asked you?
8	A lot 8    A little 1    Not at all 0	A lot 6    A little 2    Not at all 1	V free 5    Little free 4    Not free 0	V easy 2    Easy 6    Difficult 1
	Q 9: How much did reading about what you were going to learn help you?	Q 10: How much did you like working in groups?		
8	A lot 7    A little 2    Not at all 0	A lot 4    A little 4    Not at all 1		

N = 9

**Table 8.3      Summary of responses to questions 1 to 10 on learners' questionnaire of 17:09:2002**

Positive themes	Responses
1. He teaches good lessons.	4
2. He is easy to understand.	4
3. It is good and cool to be in his lessons.	3
4. I enjoyed reading	1
5. He speaks to us nicely.	1

6. I enjoyed his lessons.	1
Negative themes	
1. He is a bad teacher.	1

N= 9

**Table 8.4 Thematic summary of open ended question number 12 in learner questionnaire given on 17:02:2002.**

My own observations also confirmed that the addition of the strategic reading lessons before the introduction of new concepts proved to be both enjoyable and a real success. In considering and reflecting why this was so I came to the following conclusions:

- After the first reading lesson the learners' attitude of enthusiasm for the process and what lay in the piece they were about to read was obvious and very encouraging.
- Often after we had completed the pre-reading activities and they were reading silently through the piece they would begin to link what they were reading with questions in the worksheet that they would have to answer later.
- The innovation of them explaining to each other in pairs and in English what they had read was particularly agreeable to them. This provided an ideal opportunity, without threat, for them to learn and make use of the new and necessary vocabulary.
- Dealing with new words which they did not understand before I began with the formal teaching of the concepts was very beneficial because not only were they familiar before I used them but the learners began to use the words spontaneously as well. These words were of two types. The first category were those directly related to the new concepts. Words such as capacity, cubit, width, rectangle, area, volume, instrument, unit and callipers fell into this class. The second category contained words from normal conversation and more distant from the specific concepts being dealt with. Words such as accurate, tip, surface, main and estimate are of this sort. In clarifying these words I also used different methods. These were:

*Synonyms, opposites and definitions:* For example in lesson three "correctly" was substituted for accurately (Lesson 3, Tape 15, 02:08:2002).

*Breaking words into parts:* For example I used this technique for words such as speedometer

in lesson 5 (Lesson 5, Tape 17, 06:08:2002).

*Demonstration:* This was used to explain words such as cubit, span and capacity in Lesson 3 (Lesson 3, Tape 15, 02:08::2002) and by showing them the actual instruments for words such as syringe, callipers and thermometer in Lesson 4 (Lesson 4, Tape 16, 05:08:2002).

*Contextual transfer:* In difficult instances I would transfer the word into a number of different contexts. From these examples we would deduce the meaning of the word together. I used this method when trying to clarify the word “state” by transferring it into various human emotions and political situations.

*Code switching:* As a last resort I would ask one of the boys who I thought understood the word to translate it into Sotho or Zulu for me.

Even with all these techniques at my disposal I still sometimes found it difficult to clarify and explain some words such as “universe” and “property” adequately.

- The reading passages also went a long way to providing available language and information for their group discussions, answers to my questions and for the completion of their worksheets.
- In listening to their ability to read I realised that my decision to write the reading pieces myself had been the right one. The language and presentation of the text book at this early stage of learning from text would have been too intimidating and inaccessible.

During this cycle I also continued to build into my questioning and tasks, basic cognitive skills. Some of these were:

*Analysis:* In a number of lessons but especially in the lessons on area and volume I asked the students to analyse the data tables we had constructed for trends and patterns (Lesson 8, Tape 20, 14:08:2002 and Lesson 10, 18:08:2002).

*Deductive reasoning:* After analysing the data students were required to use the patterns and trends to arrive at generalised ways of determining area and volume in lessons 8 and 10 (Lesson 8, Tape 20, 14:08:2002) and Lesson 10, 18:08:2002).

*Estimation:* This skill continued to play a significant roll with students having to make estimations and

confirm them with measurements (Lesson 3, Tape 15, 02:08:2002).

*Categorization:* This skill was not only practised but the process was unpacked as well. Categorising measuring instruments in lesson 4 was an example of this (Lesson 4, Tape 16, 05:08:2002).

*Comparison:* This skill was developed in many of the lessons. For example in Lesson 2 the different states of water were compared (Lesson 2, Tape 14, 31:07:2002) and in Lesson 7 on area squares and rectangles were compared (Lesson 7, Tape 19, 12:08:2002).

As time passed an aspect that pleased me much about the methodology I was using was the increasing confidence and willingness of the students to risk and offer their own opinions on difficult conceptual issues even if they were unsure of their answers. As evidence of this I include some of their humorous but thought provoking responses to questions I posed.

Question: Is a smile and laughter matter?

Responses: L: The sound of laughter fills the air so laughter takes up space and so is matter.

N: A smile covers your lips and so takes up space and so is matter.

I: Air is not matter because it is too light for anyone to find its mass (Diary, 31:07:2002).

Question: Why is a triangle called a triangle?

Response: I: Because it is trying to be an angle! (Diary, 12:08:2002).

Question: Is water alive?

Response: J: No, because it cannot walk and breathe.

H: Yes, because it is needed by humans and forms part of us.

L: Yes, because it smells when it is bad (Lesson 1, Tape 13, 30:07:2002).

Finally, I believe that the eclectic methodology that I had developed over the three cycles had matured into one which worked with the students and which they enjoyed. Because of their volatile and unpredictable behaviour I always had to read the situation when they walked into my class and be flexible with what methodology I used that day. Without a doubt, because of the level of academic and language deprivation and the their impulsive and inconsistent class conduct, teaching these kind of



students places very heavy psychological and emotional demands on the teacher. In order to provide an insight into this I include a piece from my diary of 2 August 2002.

“I also realise that this kind of teaching with these kind of students is very demanding and exhausting because at the same time you must:

- be very competent in terms of the subject content
- be very aware of the level of language you are using
- think up and be able to adapt a series of questions to help the students construct their understanding of a concept.
- listen very carefully to answers being given and then decide on whether they are appropriate and acceptable. Then you must think out suitable replies.
- be aware of and monitor the participation and attention levels of the students
- be aware of the process and pace of the lesson and adjust both if necessary on the spur of the moment
- pick up on any disciplinary problems and react appropriately
- think on your feet when exotic and strange answers are given or when inappropriate behaviour is shown like going to sleep, aggression or withdrawal.
- attend to and facilitate group discussions to make sure all is on track
- respond with humour and challenges to situations to maintain interest” (Diary, 02:08:2002).

#### **8.4.2.2 Learner behaviour and its effect on teacher/learner relationships**

Learner behaviour during this cycle was characterised by two distinctive trends. Firstly, apart from a few incidents, the behaviour of the students in my classes settled into one of mutual understanding and respect. They enjoyed me as a teacher and they told me so in their candid and forthright way. This is also evidenced in the thematic analysis in Table 8.5 of the difficult grade 8 responses to the open ended question: What kind of person and teacher am I? in the learner questionnaire of 17 September 2002. All the responses were positive.

Attribute	Responses	Attributes	Responses
1. He is a good teacher	6	7. He is cool	1
2. He explains well	4	8. He is serious	1

3. He is a good person	2	9. He is respectful	1
4. He asks many questions	2	10. He is knowledgeable	1
5. He is funny	1	11. He is positive	1
6. He is happy	1	12. He is like a parent	1

N = 9

**Table 8.5      Thematic analysis of responses to the question in the student questionnaire of 17:09:2002: What kind of person and teacher am I.**

My student centred approach had in the end payed dividends and although there were flair- ups every now and then the classroom environment and atmosphere, as well as the behaviour of the students, was such that effective teaching and learning could take place - one of the few in the school where this was so. The need for congruency (Meador, 1984) and empathetic understanding (Rogers, 1951) in this student centred outlook was echoed in the response of H in the teacher questionnaire that I gave her on 23 August 2002. She wrote:

“I think as their teacher and parent (substitute) they must know what makes you happy, angry and sad and I sometimes share all these moods with them not forgetting to complement them when they have done something good. Personally when they pushed me and I got angry I responded in a hard way because sometimes if you hide your emotions they won’t get the message clearly.”

Unfortunately this insight was not enough. Somehow she did not have the flexibility, or the confidence to share her power with the boys so that they felt accepted and cared for. Her insecurity turned to an aggressive authoritarian teaching style just the reverse of what was needed. With their histories, experience and backgrounds the boys reacted as expected. For these reasons her classroom disintegrated into being one of the most volatile and anger ridden ones in the school. This was a classic replay of the findings of Foley (1983), Le Roux and Smith (1998a) and Schurink (1995).

During this cycle there were however a few unpredictable behavioural incidents in my classes that challenged and reminded never to be complacent. The one concerned a boy named H who for whatever reason one day decided to totally ignore me even though he attended my class regularly every

day. My diary captures the situation well.

“H has not looked at me, made eye contact or spoken to me for three weeks now and has been morose and uncommunicative in the extreme. He refuses to look at me or speak to me when I speak to him. He seems to have such anger beneath the surface that he broods all the time. He does however do what I ask, grasps the work but refuses to participate verbally or openly in any way. Even when asked questions directly he refuses to participate openly in any way or even recognise my presence. Something has happened to upset him - not necessarily me. All my attempts to get through to him have failed. My approach now is just to ignore him  
“(Diary, 21:08:2002).

I quote this incident to show how quickly and without warning a relationship with the street child can change - this time for the worse. However a kind deed, a sympathetic ear or time spent talking one on one can improve it quickly as well. As Agrawal, (1999, p. 86) says: “So sensitive are they to affection and care!”

The second issue concerned the reaction of the students when one of their peers stole a piece of my equipment. Again my diary captures the essence of the encounter.

“On packing up I noticed that my little tape measure was missing. It had only been used on one side of the room and so I knew which of the boys could be responsible. I immediately spoke to those boys left in the room who had been on that side. They became very animated and agitated at my sense of disappointment and soon began to search each other without finding the tape. L became upset because he felt that I was accusing him and then S left the room in a hurry only to return with the tape saying that he had found it in the pocket of J. On my confronting J he was a mess of tears and denial saying that he had looked in his pockets but had only found biscuits. T, J’s older brother, flew into a rage and said that J had become addicted to theft. He apologised for his brother’s actions and I could sense that he was upset that it might have some influence on his and my relationship ” (Diary, 7:08:2002).

I found this sensitivity to my feelings and concern for my positive opinion by the majority of the students touching and encouraging. The trust between us, that had taken so long to establish, was beginning to prick their consciences when others acted or said anything to bruise or damage it. As Agrawal (1999); Schurink (1995); Ennew (1994) and Swart (1990) all comment, the sensitivities of street children are not dead.

The second trend was a further deterioration of the behaviour of the students in other classes and the worsening of their relationships with the rest of the staff. The “pack power” was very evident with certain students playing a leading role. My diary of 21 August 2002 records the following:

“H in grade 8 is the “godfather” - silent, brooding, ruthless and angry and the mastermind behind the reign of terror. L, Lu, T and W, to a lesser extent, are the enforcers and hit men making sure that their choice of disruptive behaviour for that day such as non-attendance, having no pens, non-cooperation, personal teacher attacks or bickering and squabbling was carried out by all whether they liked it or not.”

This organised and, for the teachers, threatening behaviour was captured in H’s response to the teacher questionnaire. She wrote:

“Their history on the streets made them lose trust in adults and as their teacher they will test you to such extremes that if you are not strong enough you can even think of quitting your job. They are more assertive to aggressive - because of their history and they can do whatever they like. They can be very emotional, naughty and will do anything to get attention. They can be very judgmental, they can hurt you intentionally for twenty times and when you act once they can conclude that you are bad or you hate them ” ( Teacher questionnaire, 23:08:2002).

W, a male teacher, writes the following about their “pack” behaviour in school:

“To the educator to have such children in a school situation is very stressful and can sometimes lead to depression as such children have no regard of language selection when talking and it

tends to be very disrespectful when addressing adults. Once they are in a group they turn and have an influence on one another that I am tough and can talk my way out - why can't you do the same?" (Teacher questionnaire, 23:08:2002).

On 21 August 2002 the ever escalating pack and subversive behaviour came to a head when H, T, L and Lu in grade 8 lost all control in J, a young female teacher's class. My diary captures the drama.

"All accepted norms of behaviour are lost in a flurry of ruthless abuse, personally directed aggression and face-to-face loud nastiness. They take over the class, swear at her, tell her how useless she is and abuse her personally and generally. As can be imagined it proves to be a frightening experience for J. This is the last straw. I, the principal, who has given them ample warnings promptly expels them from the school. Amazingly this action actually shocks them and they find it difficult to understand that their behaviour has been that bad for them to be asked to leave " (Diary, 21:08:2002).

The effect on the school and my classes was immediate and dramatic. As soon as they were removed from the school the grade 8 class and the whole environment changed dramatically for the better. The atmosphere lightened and the students became animated in class, they responded with enthusiasm and spark and gone was the mafia like pall over the class. The lessons and the school took on a new flavour and feel - one of lightness, purpose and focus. It was only at their removal from the school that the other children in the class were willing to come forward and relate how terrorised by and terrified of these four boys they had been all year. It was this watershed and immediate improvement of the general environment, atmosphere and the ability for both teaching and learning to take place in the school that made me realise that sometimes one has to lance the boil to heal the body (Diary: 21:08:2002). On the other hand I felt a sense of sadness and failure that we had not been able to succeed with these boys.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

### **8.5.1 Students' written test results**

Table 8.6 contains the written science achievement test results and the November Science examination results for the grade 8 class. I restricted the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle test to this class because I found that some of the

concepts contained and taught in this cycle such as area and volume proved to be very difficult for the grade 7's to comprehend. The results for test three were marginally better than for cycle two with the percentage of the class averaging out at 64,6%. The range extended from 32,1% to 96,4%. The average for the three tests was 65,1%. In the November examinations this grade 8 class had a class average for science of 56,2%.

Learner		Grade 8 - 11 learners				
		Test 3		Test 2	Test 1	November exams
		Mark - Max - 56	%	%	%	%
1		30	53,6	57,8	81,8	42,5
2		44	78,5	78,9	95,4	24,1
3		54	96,4	97,3	77,2	81,6
4		Left	left	50	31,8	Left
5		46	82,1	68,4	68,1	Did not write.
6		18	32,1	39,4	81,8	40,8
7		27	48,2	21,1	45,4	29,1
8		Left	Left	Absent	50	Left
9		Absent	Absent	86,8	95,4	91,6
10		Left	Left	Absent	68,1	Left
11		37	66,1	78,9	86,3	53,3
12		Left	Left	Absent	68,1	Left
13		44	78,5	73,6	Absent	61,6
14		34	60,7	Absent	90,9	50
15		44	78,5	47,3	72,7	67,5
16		20	35,7	Absent	Absent	50
1.		Left	Left	Left	77,2	Left
Mean:		36,1	64,6	63,6	72,2	56,2
Range:		18 to 54	32,1 to 96,4	21,1 to 97,3	31,8 to 95	29,1 to 91,6

**Table 8.6      Summary of learners' Physical Science written achievement tests and November examinations.**

An interesting observation from these results were those of the four students who had been the ringleaders of the increasing disruptive pack behaviour as the year progressed. I have collected there cycle tests results in Table 8.7 below. Apart from Lu, who improved slightly, the rest showed a substantial decrease in achievement as the year progressed perhaps caused by their increasing distractions and the resulting decreasing motivation.

Student	Cycle 1 test	Cycle 2 test	Cycle 3 test
H	81,8%	57,8%	53,6%
L	90%	Absent	60,7%
T	81,8%	39,4%	32,1%
Lu	Absent	73,6%	78,5%

**Table 8.7      Summary of achievement test of ringleaders of “pack” behaviour.**

It was refreshing to note how much the students looked forward to and enjoyed writing the tests. This level of motivation and interest achieved during the writing of the tests brought home to me just what a good teaching opportunity the written test could be.

My last weeks at the school were characterised by classes of willing, interested, attentive and generally very well behaved students. We had really found each other. I understood and empathised with their fears, worries, aspirations, torments, hopes and anxieties and they recognised and appreciated my genuine concern, interest and regard for them as individuals and for their futures. I found teaching them and watching them learn a rewarding and enjoyable experience - one which made me feel I was doing something worthwhile, meaningful and significant. But most of all I enjoyed it when I could see in their eyes that they had found an adult who they could love and trust again.